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George Smith

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Assyrian Discoveries

The Assyriologist George Smith (1840–76) was trained originally as an engraver, but was enthralled by the discoveries of Layard and Rawlinson. He taught himself cuneiform script, and joined the British Museum as a ‘repairer’ or matcher of broken cuneiform tablets. Promotion followed, and after one of Smith’s most significant discoveries among the material sent to the Museum – a Babylonian story of a great flood – he was sent to the Middle East, where he found more inscriptions which contained other parts of the epic tale of Gilgamesh. In this 1875 work, a bestseller in its day, Smith describes his expedition, the difficulties encountered, and the discoveries, including hundreds of inscriptions which increased knowledge of the Babylonian and Assyrian civilisations but also had a profound effect on traditional biblical studies. Smith died in Aleppo in 1876, having revolutionised understanding of the ancient Near East.

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Frontmatter

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Frontmatter

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Frontmatter

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Frontmatter

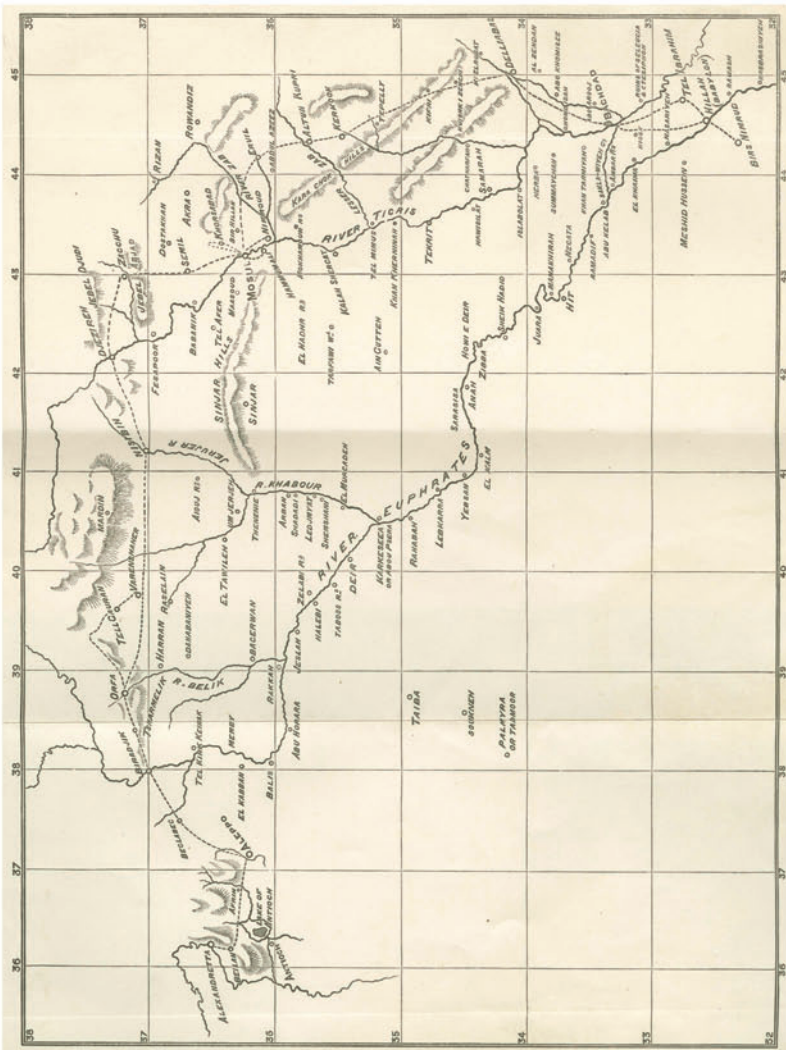
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 Frontmatter
[More information](#)



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George Smith

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

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AN ACCOUNT OF EXPLORATIONS AND

DISCOVERIES ON THE SITE OF

NINEVEH, DURING

1873 AND 1874.

BY GEORGE SMITH,

OF THE DEPARTMENT OF ORIENTAL ANTIQUITIES, BRITISH MUSEUM,

AUTHOR OF "HISTORY OF ASSURBANIPAL,"

ETC. ETC.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS.



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George Smith

Frontmatter

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George Smith

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

TO

DR. BIRCH, LL.D.

KEEPER OF THE DEPARTMENT OF ORIENTAL ANTIQUITIES,

BRITISH MUSEUM ;

PRESIDENT OF THE SOCIETY OF BIBLICAL ARCHÆOLOGY ;

PRESIDENT OF THE ORIENTAL CONGRESS,

ETC. ETC. ETC.,

AS A RESPECTFUL TRIBUTE TO HIS LEARNING AND GENIUS,

THIS WORK

Is Dedicated.

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Frontmatter

[More information](#)

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George Smith
Frontmatter

[More information](#)



P R E F A C E .

THE following work was written to give in a permanent form some account of the excavations undertaken in 1873 and 1874 on the site of Nineveh ; and the principal discoveries which have resulted from these operations. The honour of having started this enterprise belongs to the proprietors of the "Daily Telegraph" newspaper, and at the close of the first expedition they presented the firman and excavating plant to the trustees of the British Museum to facilitate the renewal of the work. The second expedition was only to take advantage of the remainder of the time allowed by the firman, and I was directed to close the excavations within the period allowed by the concession of the Porte.

I have been working in the territory of the Turkish empire, and it is with regret that I have had to mention the unsatisfactory conduct of many of its agents. I have not made the most of this ; I have

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George Smith

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

omitted many incidents of bad conduct, and have stated those I have mentioned as moderately and slightly as possible; but I could not have passed the subject over entirely without falsifying my narrative. I have not the smallest doubt that in the government of Asia the Turks are not alive to their own interests, and particularly in the oppressive laws and persecution of the Christians. The American missions in Asiatic Turkey are doing a noble work in the country, but they can only be useful in proportion to the amount of official support they receive from England and America.

In the body of my work I have acknowledged the assistance I received from several gentlemen, official and private, in my expeditions. To these I must add the name of M. Péretié, the French consul at Mosul, who was of great assistance to me in my dealings with the Turkish officials, and took as much interest in my affairs as if I had been a fellow-subject with himself. The presence of M. Péretié at Mosul, and his generous attention to British interests, makes the want of a British consul less felt; but it is extremely unfortunate that in the wide extent of country between Aleppo and Baghdad there is not a single British representative.

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on the Site of Nineveh, During 1873 and 1874George Smith
Frontmatter[More information](#)

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.—FORMER EXCAVATIONS AND DISCOVERIES
IN THE VALLEY OF THE EUPHRATES AND
TIGRIS.

Interest of subject.—Botta's excavations.—
Layard's works.—Rawlinson.—Hormuzd Rassam.—
Loftus.—Decipherment of cuneiform.—Grotefend.—Rawlinson.—
Behistun text.—Hincks.—Oppert.—Later decipherers . page 1

CHAPTER II.—DISCOVERIES FROM 1866 TO 1872.

Date of Jehu.—Annals of Assurbanipal.—Eclipse, B. C. 763.—
Pekah.—Hoshea.—Azariah.—Early Elamite conquest.—Reli-
gious calendar.—Sabbaths.—Early Babylonian history.—Chaldean
account of the deluge.—Offer of the "Daily Telegraph" . 9

CHAPTER III.—FROM LONDON TO MOSUL.

Paris.—Marseilles.—Mediterranean.—Palermo.—Etna.—Syracuse.—
Smyrna.—Alexandretta.—Beilan.—Hotels.—Pass of Beilan.—
Afrin.—Robber.—Aleppo.—Turkish holiday.—Euphrates.—
Tchamelek.—Orfa.—American missions.—Christians in Turkey.—
Varensaher.—River Khabour.—Nisibin.—Rising of Shammar
Arabs.—Sofuk.—Abdul Kareem.—Tellibel.—Djezireh.—River
Tigris.—Khabour.—Zaccho.—Mule driver.—Nineveh . . 15

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-07899-3 - Assyrian Discoveries: An Account of Explorations and Discoveries
on the Site of Nineveh, During 1873 and 1874

George Smith

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

x

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER IV.—VISIT TO BABYLONIA.

Mosul.—The serai.—Turkish pacha.—French consul.—Inscription of Vul-nirari.—Raft.—Nimroud.—Kalah Shergat.—Rocks and cave.—Tekrit.—Baghdad.—Col. Herbert.—Babylon.—Babel.—Extent of walls.—Kasr.—Hanging gardens.—Birs Nimrud.—Seven stages of tower.—Ruin of Babylon.—Hymer.—Tel Ibrahim.—Cutha.—Arab encampment.—Road to Mosul.—Ervil.—The Zab.—The Ghazr.—Ferry 46

CHAPTER V.—EXCAVATIONS AT NIMROUD.

Toma Shishman.—The mound.—Tower.—Palaces.—History.—Temple of Nebo.—South-west palace.—Model of hand. *South-* east palace.—Painted wall.—Winged figures.—Graves.—House building.—Arab entertainment.—Close excavations 69

CHAPTER VI.—EXCAVATIONS AT KOUYUNJIK.

Wall of Nineveh.—Northern gate.—The Khosr.—Great gate.—Nebbi Yunas.—Kouyunjik.—Palaces.—History.—Capture of Nineveh.—Library.—Hammum Ali.—North palace, Kouyunjik.—Law tablet.—Deluge fragment.—Discoveries.—Khorsabad.—Orders to close.—Syllabary.—Visit to Nimroud 86

CHAPTER VII.—FROM MOSUL TO ENGLAND.

Backsheesh.—Mill stream.—Jebel Abjad.—Power of rivers.—Deluge mountains.—Stories.—M. Costi and Mr. Kerr.—Desert Arabs.—Nisibin.—Wounded Arab.—Orfa.—Abraham's pool.—Castle.—Biradjik.—Aleppo.—Turkish custom-house.—Deceit.—Alexandretta.—Antiquities seized.—Their release 104

CHAPTER VIII.—SECOND JOURNEY TO MOSUL.

Release of antiquities.—New discoveries.—Syrian robber.—Severe winter.—Tcharmelek.—Calah.—Dinasar.—Turkish conscription.—Abdul Kareem.—Irregular soldiers.—Nisibin.—Entertainment.—Dancing boy.—Derunah.—Post travelling 119

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-07899-3 - Assyrian Discoveries: An Account of Explorations and Discoveries on the Site of Nineveh, During 1873 and 1874

George Smith

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

CONTENTS.

xi

CHAPTER IX.—EXCAVATIONS AT KOUYUNJIK.

Ali Rahal.—Turkish governor.—Redif Pacha.—New policy.—Turkish demands.—Temples.—Curious pottery.—Early palace.—Roman bottle.—North palace.—Ruined entrance.—Perfect bilingual tablet.—Inscriptions of Shalmaneser I.—Palace of Sennacherib.—Entrance.—Library chamber.—Fork.—Historical cylinders.—Difficulties.—Close of work 135

CHAPTER X.—RETURN FROM ASSYRIA.

Khan Baleos.—Mosul.—Departure.—Severe weather.—Stoppage.—Tel Adas.—Semil.—Discontent of soldiers.—Want of pay.—Durnak.—Crossing the Hazel.—Djzireh.—Circassian guides.—Their outrages.—Varensaher.—Orfa.—Curiosities.—Biradjik.—Antiquities stopped.—Ride to Aleppo.—Difficulties with pacha.—Release of boxes.—Embarkation.—Return 153

CHAPTER XI.—THE IZDUBAR OR FLOOD SERIES OF LEGENDS.

Chaldean account of flood.—New portions.—Izdubar.—Probably Nimrod.—Antiquity of legends.—Conquests of Izdubar.—His illness.—Hasisadra.—The flood.—Erech.—Conquest of Monster.—Zaidu.—Heabani.—Humbaba.—Ishtar.—Divine bull.—Death of Heabani.—Izdubar's sorrow.—His journey.—The giants.—Hasisadra.—Account of deluge.—Building the ark.—The flood.—Mountains of Nizir.—The birds.—Translation of patriarch.—Cure of Izdubar.—His lament.—Ghost of Heabani.—Comparison with Bible and Berosus.—Remarks 165

CHAPTER XII.—EARLY BABYLONIAN TEXTS.

Elamite conquest.—Sargon of Akkad.—His birth.—Concealed in ark.—Agu.—Temple of Bel.—Prayer for the king.—Dungi king of Ur.—Kudurmabuk.—Hammurabi.—Conquest of Babylonia.—Early bilingual text.—Turanian writing.—Semitic writing.—Riagu.—Text from Kouyunjik.—Kurigalzu.—Merodach Baladan I.—Royal grant.—Boundary stone.—Curses 223

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-07899-3 - Assyrian Discoveries: An Account of Explorations and Discoveries on the Site of Nineveh, During 1873 and 1874

George Smith
Frontmatter[More information](#)

xii

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER XIII.—EARLY ASSYRIAN INSCRIPTIONS.

Early pottery.—Text of Vul-nirari I.—Shalmaneser.—Temple of Ishtar.—Tugulti-ninip.—Babylonian wars.—Mutagil-nusku.—Assur-risilim.—Tiglath Pileser I.—Assur-nazir-pal 242

CHAPTER XIV.—INSCRIPTIONS OF TIGLATH PILESER II., B.C. 745 TO 727.

Annals of Tiglath Pileser.—Their importance.—Tablet from Nimroud.—Babylonian wars.—Eastern wars.—Arabian wars.—Syrian tribute list.—Building of palace.—Fragments of annals.—Azariah.—Menahem.—Rezon.—His defeat.—War in Palestine.—Pekah.—Hoshea.—Confirmation of Bible 253

CHAPTER XV.—INSCRIPTIONS OF SARGON, B.C. 722 TO 705.

Historical cylinder.—Median chiefs.—War with Ashdod.—Azuri.—Ahimiti.—Yavan.—Revolt.—Turning watercourses.—Judah.—Edom.—Moab.—Embassy to Pharaoh.—Egypt's weakness.—Advance of Sargon.—Flight of Yavan.—Seal of Sargon 288

CHAPTER XVI.—INSCRIPTIONS OF SENNACHERIB, B.C. 705 TO 681.

Cylinder C.—Intermediate record.—Titles.—War with Mero-dach Baladan.—Conquest of Babylonia.—Conquest of Kassi.—Ellipi.—War in Palestine.—Elulias of Zidon.—Zidqa of Askelon.—Revolt of Ekron.—Battle with Egyptians.—Hezekiah.—Siege of Jerusalem.—Submission and tribute.—Second Babylonian war.—Letter from governor 295

CHAPTER XVII.—INSCRIPTIONS OF ESARHADDON, B.C. 681 TO 668.

New texts.—Wars with Tirhakah.—Bahal of Tyre.—March through Palestine.—Meroe.—Desert.—Want of water.—Long marches.—Conquest of Egypt.—Wars of Sennacherib.—Suzub.—Elamites.—Plunder of temple of Bel.—Babylonian dated tablet 311

CHAPTER XVIII.—INSCRIPTIONS OF ASSURBANIPAL, B.C. 668 TO 626.

Greek Sardanapalus.—Library.—Former publication.—Egyptian history.—Sabako.—Tirhakah.—Undamane.—Text.—Titles.—

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-07899-3 - Assyrian Discoveries: An Account of Explorations and Discoveries on the Site of Nineveh, During 1873 and 1874

George Smith

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

CONTENTS.

xiii

Campaign against Tirhakah.—Revolt of Egypt.—Death of Tirhakah.—Undamane.—Second Egyptian campaign.—Siege of Tyre.—Arvad.—Gyges of Lydia.—Psammitichus.—War with Minni.—War with Elam.—Revolt of Babylon.—Wars with Elam.—Restoration of Nana.—Arabian war.—Armenian embassy.—Restoration of palace.—Restoration of temples.—Brick from Babylon . 317

CHAPTER XIX.—INSCRIPTIONS OF BEL-ZAKIR-ISKUN, KING OF ASSYRIA, AND HIS SUCCESSORS.

Want of Monuments.—Obscurity of history.—Bel-zakir-iskun.—Cylinder.—Fall of Assyria.—Rise of Babylon.—Nebuchadnezzar.—Evil Merodach.—Nergalsharezer.—Method of dating.—Nabonidus.—Belshazzar.—Cyrus.—Cambyses.—Darius.—Trilingual text.—Artaxerxes.—Parthian date.—Important evidence . 381

CHAPTER XX.—MISCELLANEOUS TEXTS.

Hymn to light.—Translation.—Invocation to Izdubar.—His worship.—Babylonian text.—Prayer to Bel.—Inundation.—Seven evil spirits.—Their work.—Bel.—Sin, Shamas, and Ishtar.—Attack on the moon.—War in heaven.—Message to Hea.—Mission of Merodach.—Comparison of legends.—Character of deities.—Astronomy.—Four seasons.—Intercalary month.—Astrolabe.—Observation of eclipse.—Respect for laws.—Epigraphs.—Letter.—Deed of sale.—Date of Assurbanipal.—Sale of slave.—Syllabaries.—Bilingual lists 391

CHAPTER XXI.—FOREIGN INSCRIPTIONS.

Baghdad lion.—Egyptian monarch.—Ra-set-nub or Saïtes.—Founder of Shepherd power.—Tablet of Rameses.—Date of monument.—Hyksos.—Expelled by Amosis.—Worship of Set.—Type of lion.—Hamath inscription.—Seals at Nineveh.—Cypriote inscription.—Phœnician texts.—Contract tablets.—Pehlevi inscriptions.—Later texts.—Nisibin.—Destruction of monuments . . . 420

CHAPTER XXII.—OBJECTS ILLUSTRATING ARTS AND CUSTOMS.

Larger sculptures already discovered.—Hand in wall.—Lintel.—Head of Ishtar.—Shoulder of statue.—Winged bull—Assyrian

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-07899-3 - Assyrian Discoveries: An Account of Explorations and Discoveries
on the Site of Nineveh, During 1873 and 1874

George Smith

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

xiv

CONTENTS.

columns.—Crystal throne.—Crystal vase.—Name of Sennacherib.—
Lamps.—Lamp feeder.—Assyrian fork.—Glass.—Roman bottle.—
Glass seal.—Pottery.—Cypriote style.—Chariot group.—Commerce.
—Personal ornaments.—Rings.—Beads.—Seals.—Later occupa-
tion of mound.—Destruction of antiquities 428

CHAPTER XXIII.—CONCLUSION.

Difficulty of work.—Short time.—Good results.—Babylonian
kings.—Assyrian kings.—New inscriptions.—Uncertainty of chro-
nology.—Assyrian history.—Jewish history.—Pul.—New light on
the Bible.—Origin of Babylonian civilization.—Turanian race.—
Semitic conquest.—Flood legends.—Mythology.—Connection with
Grecian mythology.—Astronomy.—Architecture.—Importance of
future excavations 437



Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-07899-3 - Assyrian Discoveries: An Account of Explorations and Discoveries
on the Site of Nineveh, During 1873 and 1874

George Smith
Frontmatter

[More information](#)



LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS.

- M** AP, Frontispiece.
2. Side of portal excavated by M. Botta at Khorsabad,
to face p. 2.
 3. Black obelisk, discovered by Layard at Nimroud, 10.
 4. View of Nimroud, 49.
 5. Terra-cotta winged figure, 78.
 6. Photograph of figure of warrior on painted brick from south-east
palace, Nimroud, to face p. 80.
 7. Plan of site of Nineveh, to face p. 86.
 8. The Jebel Djudi, or Deluge mountains, to face p. 108.
 9. View of bay of Alexandretta from Beilan, 116.
 10. Bronze lamp, 140.
 11. Pottery from Kouyunjik, 141.
 12. Procession of warriors, 142.
 13. Roman bottle, 143.
 14. Terra-cotta vase, 146.
 15. Bronze fork, 147.
 16. Bone spoon, 147.
 17. Dead buffalo in water, 148.
 18. Photograph of marble model of winged bull, to face p. 174.
 19. Emblems of the gods on stone of Merodach Baladan I., to face
p. 236.
 20. Head from statue of the goddess Ishtar, from her temple,
Kouyunjik, 248.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-07899-3 - Assyrian Discoveries: An Account of Explorations and Discoveries
on the Site of Nineveh, During 1873 and 1874

George Smith

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

xvi *LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS.*

21. Photograph of lintel of doorway, great court of Sennacherib's palace, to face p. 308.
22. Photograph of terra-cotta bilingual tablet, to face p. 392.
23. Object with Cypriote characters, 423.
24. Model of hand found in wall, 429.
25. Bronze throne, discovered by Layard at Nimroud, 432.
26. Terra-cotta lamp, 433.
27. Terra-cotta lamp feeder, 433.
28. Bronze bracket, 434.
29. Bronze style, 434.

